

My name is Nancy Frank, I reside in Clancy and I'm speaking today on behalf of Options Women's Clinic in Helena where I serve as Executive Director. Options is one of 9 pregnancy help clinics in Montana supported by more than 20,000 Montanans. At our clinic we see young women and girls struggling with unplanned pregnancy. We have seen girls as young as 13, and many of our patients are 17 and under. Because of confidentiality, I cannot disclose specific cases or names, but I can assure you that we have heard more than one story of women younger than 17 who have had abortions without their parents' knowledge.

Most surgical abortions are performed in out-patient clinics where women and girls are sent home with little after care. At Options we have had post-abortive patients tell us that after an abortion, a woman is pretty much left on her own should complications occur. Think about a 14-year-old going through this without her parents' knowledge. If a minor has a tonsillectomy, parents are informed of possible complications to watch for and instructed what to do should that occur. There is no opportunity for that in the case of an abortion on a minor whose parents are not informed.

Parental notification is required in virtually all non-emergency procedures except abortion. To not involve parents in a procedure that is potentially life-threatening to the minor, and one that has the potential of life-long after effects, robs parents of their rights and what common sense tells us is good parenting. This bill provides for appropriate bypass in cases where there is genuine concern for the safety of the minor and establishes the rightful duty parents have to protect and exercise authority over the health care and well-being of their children.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, in the interest of women's health, the safety of minors, and to protect parental rights, I urge you to pass this bill.